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## In search of repair

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## Summary

The main research questions that shape this study is why whiteness is a particularly theological problem and what an appropriate theological response from white theologians would look like? These questions are asked repeatedly in dialogue with different theologians, trying to develop a deeper understanding of race in general and whiteness in particular as specifically theological problems.

The thesis develops through five chapters, with each of the first four chapters asking what theological problems are with race in general and whiteness in particular, discerned by the interlocutors engaged. In response, each chapter discerns aspects of what a theology that disrupts the whiteness of theology, would look like.

Chapters 1 and 3 form a unit by looking at two particular instances where African-American/black theologians worked to describe the theological problem of race in general and whiteness in particular, in the context of the USA and South Africa. Chapters 2 and 4 form a unit by looking at white attempts at a theological disruption of whiteness or a construction of a theology that disrupts the problem of whiteness, using examples from continental Europe and the USA in the one chapter and focusing on South Africa in the other.

Chapter 1 analyses the so-called Duke school of race and theology, referring to the books of Kameron Carter and William Jennings published in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The chapter reads them together and does this consciously from a South African context. The focus of the chapter is specifically on their respective and joined attempts at describing whiteness as a theological problem in colonialism and modernity. This is particularly related to their thesis on the relationship between whiteness and Christian supersessionism, and the way in which space and bodies were being recreated in racial imagination.

Chapter 2 analyses the work of two white theologians who at different points were singled out by James Cone for their particular work at interpreting and working out the implications of black theology for those who are white: The Dutch theologian Theo Witvliet and the US theologian Jim Perkinson. The development of their respective attempts to consciously respond to black theology is focuses on, among other things, tracing a divergence in their work in response to Charles Long. This assists in highlighting key questions that white theologians consciously respond to the problem of whiteness need to consider.

Chapter 3 turns the focus to South Africa, and in particular to the black theology of liberation's attempt to theologically engage the problem of whiteness and white racism in the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter starts out with a theological analysis of the writings of the black consciousness leader Steve Biko, specifically in terms of the notion 'true humanity', and then proceeds to focus on how this was worked out in more formal systematic theology through the black theology of Simon Maimela and Takatso Mofokeng. In their respective projects, I highlight how different theological proposals on how to speak of 'true humanity' in the context of white racism were arrived at.

Chapter 4 then turns to three white theologians from the same period, analysing the way in which they heard the challenge of black consciousness and black theology. Beyers Naudé, Albert Nolan, and Klippies Kritzinger. These represent key white theologians working in close proximity or direct response to the emerging black theology under apartheid, and to some extent beyond apartheid. While Naudé and Nolan respectively played prominent roles in the Christian Institute and Institute of Contextual Theology, Kritzinger became the first white theologian to attempt to consciously work out the implications of black theology for those who are white in a sustained manner.

Out of the analysis of these critical voices, the study concludes by proposing three lines of inquiry that could inform future theological reflection on whiteness. Firstly, the question of salvation in relation to whiteness is outlined. The way in which whiteness was intertwined with Christian soteriological visions call for vigilance in any hasty claims on white salvation and a rejection of a white mediation of salvation. Rather, whiteness itself is described as a refusal of grace, and the transformative work required described as a dismantling of such a refusal to allow space for the work of repair.

Secondly, the importance of how bodies relate to space in the formation of race in general and whiteness in particular is noted as key in the work of dismantling whiteness. The study focuses attention on how a Christian theology informed a distorted relation to space, and highlights a changed relationship to particular place as critical to the work of clearing away a refusal of grace. A nostalgic emphasis on a world created is, however, described as underplaying the fundamental disruption of space that modernity brought. Therefore, the work required is described as a recreation of space. For those who are white, this call for a lifetime of life in a particular community that is not organised around whiteness.

Thirdly, the way in which contemporary notions of the human have been thoroughly distorted by a racial imagination and racist history is placed at the heart of the study. Attempts at reimagining

humanity in ways not bound to whiteness, particularly as this took form in South African black theology, receive particular attention. Rather than a theory of the human, what is called for is the slow work of reimagining humanity in concrete community not organised around whiteness. This is described as the soil in which theological anthropologies not bound to whiteness may emerge.